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Graduate School of Management

Master in Management

INCLUSION-ORIENTED HRM PRACTICES IN IT COMPANIES IN RUSSIA

Master's Thesis by the 2nd year student

Concentration – Management

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ЗАЯВЛЕНИЕ О САМОСТОЯТЕЛЬНОМ ХАРАКТЕРЕ ВЫПОЛНЕНИЯ ВЫПУСКНОЙ КВАЛИФИКАЦИОННОЙ РАБОТЫ

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ABSTRACT

| | |
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| Master Student's Name | Maria Kozyreva |
| Master Thesis Title | INCLUSION-ORIENTED PRACTICES IN THE IT COMPANIES IN RUSSIA |
| Faculty | Graduate School of Management, Saint-Petersburg State University |
| Program | Master in Management |
| Year | 2020 |
| Academic Advisor's Name | Antonina Yu. Lisovskaya |
| Description of the goals, tasks and main results | <p>The goal of this research was to identify the existing understanding of diversity and inclusion in the IT industry, find the problems of the field and provide possible solutions. Therefore, the problem of research encompassed existing inclusion issues in organizational culture of the Russian IT companies and currently non-existent or not properly working inclusion practices. The tasks of the research were to study the existing theoretical information and market analysis on topic of inclusion and collect information from the respondents to identify problems in the field and offer solutions. As a result of the research, such issues as lack of female leadership, misunderstanding of diversity, traditionally male and female positions in IT, lack of intercultural communication and discrimination over minor disagreements were identified. Corresponding solutions with advice on implementation based on the theoretical background and respondents' opinions was provided.</p> |
| Keywords | Inclusion practices, IT companies, diversity management |

АННОТАЦИЯ

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|--|---|
| Автор | Козырева Мария Андреевна |
| Название ВКР | ПРАКТИКИ ВОВЛЕЧЕНИЯ ПЕРСОНАЛА В ИТ-КОМПАНИЯХ РОССИИ |
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| Описание целей, задач и основных результатов | <p>Цель работы заключалась в определении существующего понимания инклюзии и разнообразия на рабочем месте в ИТ-компаниях, выявлении проблем и предложении возможных решений для работы с персоналом. Проблемы исследования включают в себя существующие вопросы управления разнообразием в российских ИТ-компаниях и отсутствие практик вовлечения персонала. Задачи исследования: изучить существующие академические и профессиональные источники на тему практик вовлечения персонала, собрать данные с помощью интервью и, идентифицировав проблемы, предложить решения. В результате проведенного исследования были выявлены такие проблемы, как отсутствие женского лидерства, неправильное восприятие вопросов разнообразия, традиционно женские и мужские позиции в ИТ, недостаток межкультурной коммуникации и дискриминация по малозначимым особенностям. Для решения данных проблем были предложены рекомендации по внедрению практик вовлечения персонала.</p> |
| Ключевые слова | Практики вовлечения, управление разнообразием, ИТ компании |

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Introduction

Inclusion is an extremely pressing topic today, as, according to various reports of the consulting experts, the workforce is becoming more and more heterogeneous. People of all ages, abilities, genders, nationalities and so on are increasing their presence among the employees of a wide range of companies, and IT companies are no exception. As they stand on the frontier of the innovation, these companies are likely to welcome new practices and implement them, as in the world of innovation there is always a race to gain competitive advantage. This thesis focuses on inclusion of female professionals, however, the overall understanding of diversity and inclusion is very broad and practices can be adapted to various vulnerable groups in the workplace, so different aspects of diversity will be mentioned as well, considering that they often overlap with inclusion of female professionals.

The terms “diversity” and “inclusion” often go together. Diversity is considered by many authors a tool for improving companies’ performance, because creativity, innovativeness, positive corporate atmosphere often benefit from inclusion practices implemented in companies. While it is understood not only by scholars, but also by many practicing managers in the field, it is still a source of problems for the employees, as the practices are not accepted by everyone or implemented in a false way (or, sometimes, not implemented at all). (Uribe-Bohorquez, Martinez-Ferrero, Garcia-Sanchez Isabel-Maria 2019). Various components of the practices are not aligned in an appropriate way, decreasing the efficiency of the said practices. There are other factors, which hinder the development of the inclusion practices, which will be further considered in this thesis. Among them, lack of credibility, “competition” between the targeted groups and strong local context influence can be mentioned.

As we talk about local context, it is vital to say that Russian companies, unlike their foreign competitors, rarely have certain special inclusion practices, as it is virtually impossible to find any information about such practices in open sources and employees are often reluctant to disclose information about organizational practices in their companies. It is surely influenced by the overall view of the inclusion and the traditional disposition of the workforce on the Russian market. Still, the companies are certain to benefit from the implementation of such practices.

There are some opposing views on the issue, such as understanding inclusion as a tool to improve a company's performance (Hunt, Prince, Dixon-Fyle, Yee 2018) and an opposing opinion that inclusion and diversity may sometimes be harmful (Williams, O'Reilly 1998). Existing beliefs in the “fake” diversity used to cover the real problems with the human resource management in companies are gaining momentum among the employees of many companies,

even though they are not voiced aloud a lot. It would be a good idea to consider this side of the question as well, regarding the actual benefits of inclusion and whether it has a direct effect on the performance of companies.

The goal of this research is to identify the existing understanding of diversity and inclusion in the IT industry, find the problems of the field and provide possible solutions. Therefore, the problem of research encompasses existing inclusion issues in organizational culture of the Russian IT companies and currently non-existent or not properly working inclusion practices. The purpose of this thesis is to provide theoretical and practical information of diversity and inclusion in IT companies in Russia, as this topic is not researched enough, which provides us with the following research gap and research questions.

As for the research gap, while diversity and inclusion practices have already been considered a pressing issue in Western countries, the issue in Russia is not researched enough today, especially for the tech sector, although, being internationally oriented and innovative-minded, such enterprises need diversity and inclusion the most. At the same time, from the practical perspective, companies need certain recommendations to follow to implement inclusion practices. There are few works considering the inclusion practices in Russia, and no works were found with the research in the IT companies' field and advice to such companies.

The research questions for the following study would be:

- What inclusion and diversity problems exist in Russian IT companies?
- What practices should be recommended to the IT companies in order to promote workplace inclusion?

The objectives of the research are to study the existing theoretical information and market analysis on topic of inclusion and collect information from the respondents to identify problems in the field and offer solutions. As a result of research, a list of problems stated by the respondents and analyzed by the author would be provided, as well as practical recommendations on topic of inclusion practices and their correct implementation.

CHAPTER 1. OVERVIEW OF THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL GROUNDS OF INCLUSION

1.1 The broad understanding of diversity and inclusion

The terms of inclusion and diversity are virtually inseparable, as they represent the two sides of creating a working environment which combines people of various backgrounds and with diverse viewpoints, while simultaneously treating them equally to avoid workplace negativity. If we provide definitions for these terms, they may also vary depending on the authors and their understanding of the notion. Many authors agree that diversity generally refers to racial, ethnic and gender differences, but for others it includes a much broader scope of differences among people, for example religion, social class and age. (Harvey, Allard 2002) Depending on the context, it can also expand to the issues of sexual orientation, physical abilities, communication, style of learning and so on. (Sonnenschein 1997). The concept of inclusion focuses on the notion of «all» instead of «some». (April, Blass 2010). Inclusion also requires an overall change of organizational culture, style of leadership and attitude towards other employees, so this term does not only define a certain idea, but a number of practices and notions. (Miller 1998)

Inclusion practices mainly work with the groups of people, which are underrepresented as employees in companies in traditional business environments. Therefore, such groups as senior or very young employees, employees without certain educational background, female employees or young mothers, disabled employees, ethnical minorities and some other groups are among those at whom such programs are targeted. The topic of gender is pressing, as more and more women are appearing in the workplace, especially when it comes to the industries where traditionally more men are present, such as the tech field. Many companies state that they are committed to the progress of the inclusion practices; however, consulting companies reports suggest that the development is stalled. For example, for more than 30 years, female employees have been getting more bachelor's degrees than men, asking for promotions and negotiating salaries at the same rates as men, and actually they staying in the workforce at the same rate as men. (Krivkovich et al. 2018).

Women are gaining an increasing share of employment in executive positions, even in the leader roles, which have generally been regarded as a male-dominated territory. Studies suggest that while women show high disposition towards leadership with high self-control, analytical thinking and emotional intelligence, they still have to adopt stereotypically masculine behavior

when aiming for top positions, as the lack of understanding of a diverse workforce makes their position otherwise unstable. (Uribe-Bohorquez et al. 2019)

Aside from women, one of the pressing issues with increasing workforce diversity is the issue of age. World population has been aging for a number of years now, and if we consider top positions in companies, many of them are taken by the long-serving employees with a lot of experience, while the general team consists of younger professionals. Despite increasing age diversity in the workforce, managers still understand quite little about how potentially diverging motivational needs of the various generations may influence motivational strategies and organisational performance.

To increase understanding in companies, inclusion programs should be offered, in order to build stronger bonds between team members. However, age diversity management practices take a lot of effort. Managers should be provided with all the necessary tools to implement inclusion practices when working with senior employees in order to achieve positive outcomes and not fall prey to misunderstanding. Social exchange theory suggests that the higher trust, loyalty, and commitment resulting from age diversity practices and work-life programmes may lead to greater employee participation in voluntary activities for the community and the environment, which is also beneficial for companies in terms of CSR. (Emerson, 1976)

Age diversity practices and programs which are offered by an organisation can possibly generate employee perceptions of an organisation supporting a diverse workforce (Allen, Shore, Griffeth, 2003). In exchange, employees may demonstrate trust, loyalty, and commitment to the organisation (Bishop, Dow Scott, Burroughs, 2000). A pronounced diversity perspective, along with adequate age diversity management, is helpful in achieving high levels of employee trust, loyalty, and commitment as an exchange. (Muhammad, French, 2019)

There are some suggestions that there is in fact not a lot of difference between the generations. Their basic psychological needs, understanding of working process and behavior in some cases have no significant differences, so it is advised to the managers to look for personal preferences and troubles rather than implement a full inclusion program designed to help everyone, as there is no everyone with problems – there are various employees with personal questions, difficulties and strong sides. (Heyns, Kerr, 2018)

The next diversity and inclusion issue is the multi-national composition of the workforce. This is especially important for the international companies, as understanding of various cultural dimensions serves as a strong competitive advantage for a team on a multi-national market. However, the business officials in some cases lack knowledge, experience and competencies in

the topic of cultural and ethnic diversity. It is also a double-sided issue, as it is often difficult to build understanding in a multinational team, while at the same time it is more difficult for the ethnic minorities or foreigners to find a job. (Kokovikhin, Kulapov, Dvorakova, 2017)

Ethnic and cultural diversity is also a vital point for tech companies, as globally dispersed knowledge, diverse and profound expertise are among the drivers of competitive advantage in the IT world. In order to reap the benefits of multinational teams and management, it is important to decrease inequality as much as possible and build an efficient network along with a friendly atmosphere in a company. This is the only adequate response to the changing world. (Boone, Lokshin, Guenter, 2019)

1.2 The importance of diversity

Scholars have put much effort in the latest years in studying the relationship between human resource management and organisational performance, and, especially important for the current study, when a company's human resource management is characterised by implementing inclusion practices and increasing diversity in terms of demographic characteristics. The literature sources state that diversity can have positive effects on the performance of organisations, however, there is no consensus regarding the effects of this heterogeneity. Some studies (Knippenberg, Schippers, 2007) have described the idea that diversity does not by itself explain the effects on the performance of work groups. The idea that there is a straightforward and direct relationship between diversity and performance has been questioned. More attention to the intermediate variables in this relationship, such as human resource practices and other contextual variables, has been demanded. (Triguero-Sanchez, Pena-Vinches, Guillen, 2018). Diversity is the change itself, and inclusion practices helping to achieve human resource diversity are the drive of change.

There is evidence pointing at the connection between the inclusion practices and the overall success of companies employing such methods. Industry reports continuously suggest that companies, which are eager to improve their organizational behavior by implementing diversity techniques, are statistically more likely to act better financially. Moreover, companies on top of the list for gender diversity on executive teams were 21% more likely to outperform on profitability and 27% more likely to have superior value creation. The highest-performing companies on both profitability and diversity had diverse management teams, employing more women as their executives, than usual. A look from the other side of the list also suggests complementing data: companies in the bottom for both gender and ethnic/cultural diversity were

29% less likely to achieve above-average profitability than were all other companies. Of course, it is worth pointing out that many of the companies which are on top of the diversity list, are at the same time the leaders of their industry and were there long before the practices were implemented. There are authors, who are in favor of the view that diversity, especially gender diversity, has no effect on the performance of a company. (Uribe-Bohorquez, Martinez-Ferrero, Garcia-Sanchez Isabel-Maria, 2019). Some even say that it can be harmful: Williams and O'Reilly (1998) gave a few theoretical points to understand when diversity is harmful for team efficiency. First, from the point of view of the social categorization perspective (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), if people differ from each other (or perceive themselves to be different from each other), then categorization within a team is likely to occur, which often leads to negative team outcomes (van Knippenberg, Schippers, 2007). Second, the similarity/attraction paradigm states that similarities between people lead to social attraction. Both perspectives predict that teams with similar members, or members who at least perceive themselves to be similar, will be more productive than teams with diverse members. (Byrne, 1971)

However, there are examples of companies, which had diverse teams from the start and achieved remarkable success in a short time. (Hunt, Prince, Dixon-Fyle, Yee, 2018). It is also vital to be very precise when choosing a company or a demographical group for an analysis of diversity practices, paying attention not only to the direct metrics such as financial performance, but also analyzing communication and conflicts in teams as a measure of successful practices. (Lawrence, 1997)

Performance of a company is largely influenced by the management decisions its leaders make. To provide a good solution for an issue, an executive team of a company has to work as a group of employees with diverse ideas and suggestions. Interpersonal interaction is the key to a successful working atmosphere, while diverse groups of employees provide views on a problem from various angles, thus giving new dimensions to decision making. Diversity in teams should be encouraged in many ways, such as gender, cultural, educational, experience and so one, as it could have a beneficial effect on team building and team communication. Through critical investigation, innovation and interaction the highest efficiency can be achieved, while all these characteristics also apply to diverse teams of employees. (Van der Vegt, Hollenbeck, Humphrey, 2008).

Talking about tech companies and inclusion, it is worth remembering that they control almost every facet of daily life, from how people communicate to the ways in which people

travel and, even, how people buy their groceries. Their power is seemingly infinite, which is all the reason more why they must make a concerted effort to champion diverse voices from within. The people creating technologies have the power to influence how they work, and with that comes a great responsibility for any single demographic to have full control. A lack of diverse ideas and representation could lead to further disparities between gender and nationalities. (Winning, 2018)

1.3 Diversity and inclusion management

To implement inclusion practices in a successful way, it is needed to have a good knowledge of principles of diversity and inclusion management (usually called just diversity management for convenience). A good definition of this term is provided by Stoner and Russel-Chapin (1997, 12): «Diversity Management deals with the process of creating organisational culture in which workforce differences are understood and valued and each individual has the opportunity to be fully utilised. It is concerned with establishing a new framework and approach, in which a new set of core values governing the role of individual differences can be developed, i.e. a refocusing and reorientation of organisational culture.» Diversity management can also be described as strategic organisational approach to workforce diversity development, organisational culture change and empowerment of the workforce. It is a pragmatic approach, in which participants anticipate and plan for change, do not fear human differences or perceive them as a threat and view the workplace as a forum for individuals' growth and change skills and performance with direct cost benefits to the organisation (Arredondo 1996).

The main principles of diversity management include treating all people with equal dignity and respect, focus on caring about them not only as employees and part of the working system, but also as people with their own personalities, focus your organizational thinking on relationships and not make the mistake of categorising and stereotyping people, but treat them individually. Such framework as diversity management has to be a strategic goal of a company as well, because implementing inclusion practices will definitely positively affect all aspects of a company's activity. A person in charge of diversity management should have a special vision, which allows to have a picture of what should be accomplished and, according to that, provide guidelines to other employees. (Cox 2001) For this, personal passion for internally-driven initiatives and good communication skills for explaining these initiatives are required.

The effects of diversity management can be divided in two parts: internal effects on organizational structure of the company and external effects on the company's performance.

Among the internal effects, we can list high motivation in employees, as inclusion practices in companies significantly reduce absenteeism and turnover rates, creating a friendlier atmosphere and increasing employee satisfaction. (Harvey, Allard 2002) Creativity and innovation is also on the rise in company implementing good diversity management changes, as people are more likely to interact and behave more helpful. Creativity of employees, in turn, drives a company's performance. Some authors even see the positive effect on the cost structure and argue that diversity leads to cost reduction. (Nemeth 1986) Continuous improvement of activities of an organisation is also highly supported by increased mind flexibility, constant knowledge transfer between different groups of employees and improved problem solving by diverse teams with different backgrounds. (Harvard, Allard 2002) External factors include positive effects on marketing and employee recruitment. A company with working inclusion practices has more chances of recruiting the best talents across the industry and to retain those talents, as the atmosphere in company is pleasant for everyone. Modern consumers are also more likely to choose products from a company with diverse workforce and proudly advertised inclusion practices. (Cox 2001)

To create a successful set of inclusion practices, it is best to remember a number of conditions and tactics described in professional literature (such as Ferdmann, Brody 1996; Hayles, Russell 1997; Meyerson, Fletcher 2000; Weick 1984):

1. An inclusive definition of diversity should be chosen, which takes into account not only race or gender, but multiple other points;
2. A strategic plan with clear objectives and goals and according financial and organizational support should be created and communicated to everyone in the company, and as many people as possible, especially the most credible ones, should be engaged in working on it and making it happen;
3. Clear leadership and champions of the implemented change should be outlined to be the ones that people would turn to in case of misunderstandings or mispracticing;
4. Internal and external factors which may hinder the development and implementation of the inclusion practices should be always taken into account when designing them;
5. Successful preparation of inclusion practices takes identifying the most important issues of diversity in a company and analyzing it from multiple perspectives with experimentation and freedom of mind highly encouraged and ensured;

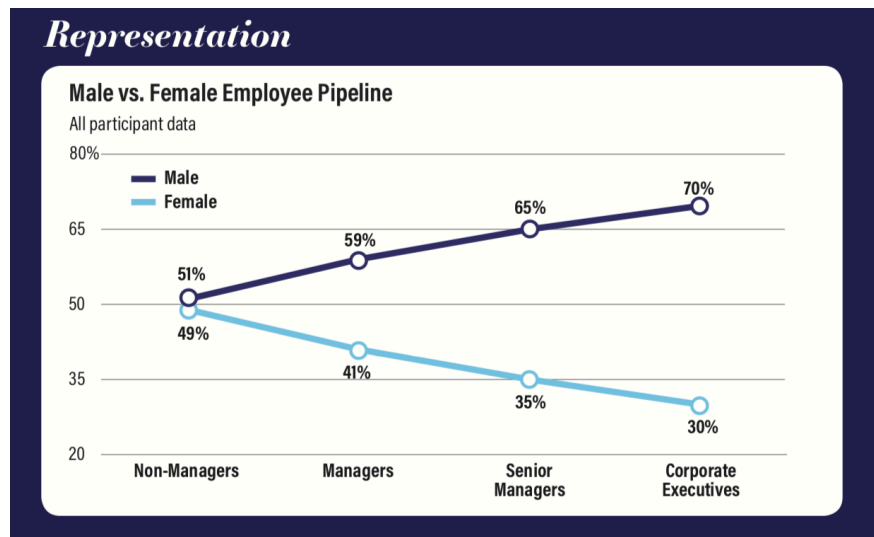
9. Accountability for the implementation of the practices should be carefully assigned across all levels of employees to ensure maximum compliance;
10. Every small milestone hit in the development of diversity in a company should be noticed and celebrated to promote further success.

1.4 Inclusion practices in foreign companies

Although this study is focused on the inclusion practices in Russia, the tech industry exists in a global business environment and is one of the business sectors which acts a lot on the multinational stage. It is also worth saying that most of the Russian companies still do not provide their employees with inclusion programs and are often reluctant to educate their leaders on the topic. This means that it would be a good idea to look at the situation and practices abroad first.

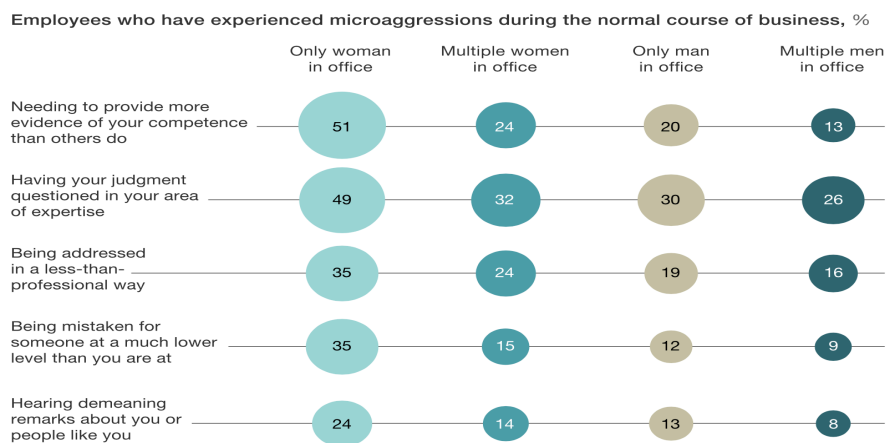
If we consider gender inclusion practices, they are among the most vital matters for the business leaders in the Western world nowadays. It is reported that everyday discrimination, sexual harassment, «the only» experience are what almost every female professional faces during her career life. First, it is much more difficult for a women to get hired, and then it is significantly tougher to get a promotion for a female professional than for a male one. But in the recent years, there has been a slow improvment, as stated by the consulting companies' reports. (Krivkovich, Nadeau, Robinson, K., Robinson, N., Starikova, Yee, 2018)

Professionals suggest that certain changes in the corporate culture have to be made in order to change the overall perception of the female professionals in all the fields, including the IT, which has by itself never been a predominantly female domain. (Devillard, Sancier-Sultan, Werner, 2014)



Picture 1. (Barry, Munster, Dahms, London, Peterson, Rolack, Watson, 2018).

Picture 1 illustrates the disposition of workforce in the US according to the gender. This means that women are well-represented at lower positions, but misrepresented as top officials.



Picture 2. (Krivkovich, Nadeau, Robinson, K., Robinson, N., Starikova, Yee, 2018).

Picture 2 shows the unpleasant situations faced by female professionals in the office.

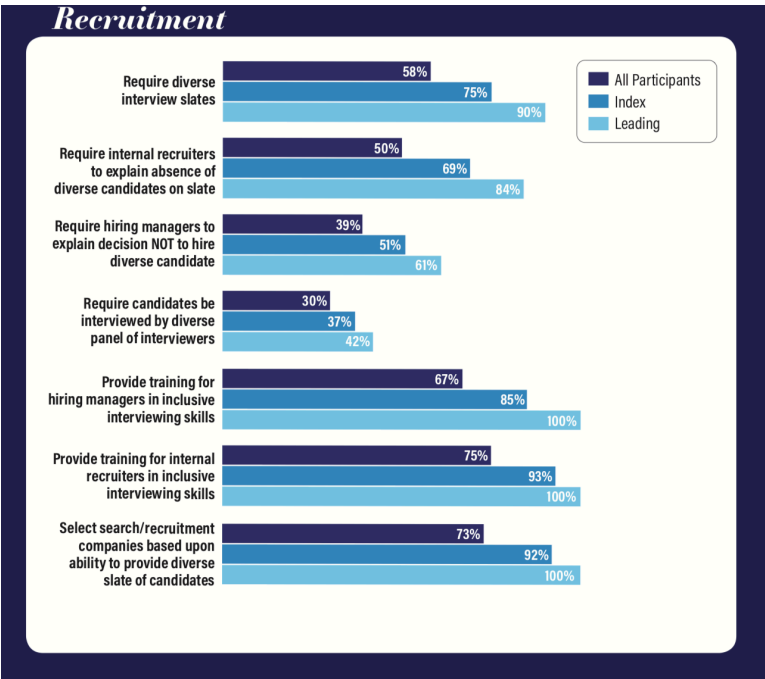


Picture 3. (Ansari, 2018)

In this picture provided in the report on the inclusion situation in the top 10 companies in the IT sector in the US it is clearly visible that there is still a long way to the ideal disposition. The companies are trying to perform more diversity-oriented, but it is a long process to implement the full network and educate all the employees on the subject, so among the problems currently being faced we can see lack of ethnic, age and gender inclusion. Still, there is an interesting find from HP data: the results showed positive discrimination against men, which means that from time to time inclusion programs can go over the top and serve as a weapon against the originally “prioritized” group. (Ansari, 2018).

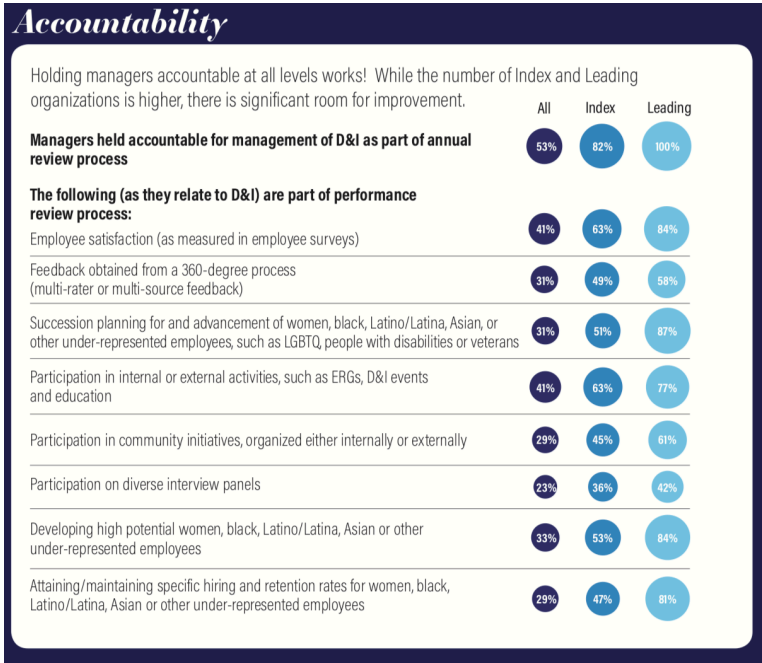
If we talk about the practices themselves, the authors generally suggest such guidelines as: to establish understandable definitions of everything that has to be done, be clear on context, balance the best for business with the best for general life, start implementing a program with the end in mind, engage benchmarking procedures by finding out about the experience of other companies and educate both yourself and the community on the cultural competence by getting

rid of stereotypes and learning the ethics of working with various inclusion groups. (Ferdman, Deane, 2014)



Picture 4. (Barry, Munster, Dahms, London, Peterson, Rolack, Watson, 2018).

Reports also suggest that inclusion practices should start from the recruitment step, as they allow to engage the employees fairly and provide a good impression, showing a company as a credible diversity-friendly workplace.



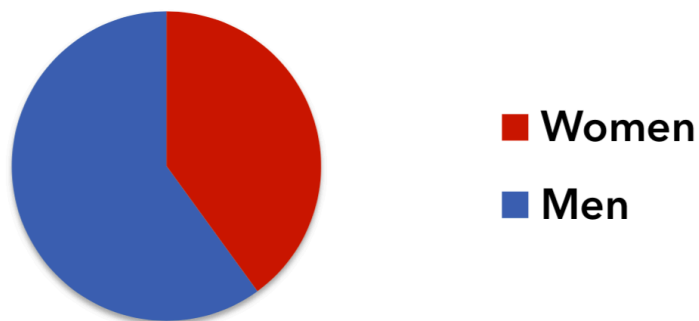
Picture 5. (Barry, Munster, Dahms, London, Peterson, Rolack, Watson, 2018).

Holding managers accountable for the implementation of the inclusion practices is a good option as well, as it, somewhat forcedly, but makes them understand the practices in a more profound way and care about the development of employees' inclusion.

1.5 The issue of workplace diversity and inclusion in Russia

The situation in Russia is in some ways different, but there have been almost no studies on the subject, which is, from the other side of the problem, discouraging managers from trying to implement inclusion practices, as no guidelines for the Russian business environment are provided yet. The most researched issue, at least in a certain way, is gender.

IT industry employees in Russia



Picture 6. (graph based on the information from Fiscutean, 2019)

As it is visible from picture 6, the situation in the Russian IT industry is not very bad, however, female employees are still underrepresented. Interestingly, Russian cultural context, being very different from, for example, the US one, has provided the possibility for women to work in the science and tech sector equally with men throughout the XX and XXI centuries. As a result of that, 60% of parents are said to encourage their daughters to study technology. However, the percentage of women in tech sector in Russia has been decreasing in the latest years. Talking exclusively about IT, we can see the data suggesting that 17% of working women are programmers. (Fiscutean, 2019) Among the cities encouraging women to work in IT St. Petersburg is named as one of the leaders, with such startups as Teambrella, Welltory, Babadu, Last.Backend said to be examples of inclusive environments for women. (Kennedy, 2017) It is argued that without equal representation in workforce no company can achieve stable growth.

An article in Forbes Russia magazine states that the development of many companies in Russia is hindered by lack of inclusion practices and diversity. It compares various practices used in foreign companies such as Apple, Mattel, IKEA and other to the lack of those in Russian companies and provides thoughts on how success of a company in the modern world is highly dependent on its diverse workforce and the company's inclusive behavior. (Kuchina 2019) What may also be the issue in Russia is the understanding of inclusion, which is currently seen as a not less needed, but different topic: inclusion of people with various disabilities into studying process. This association may often be what comes to mind of a Russian-speaking person when talkin about inclusion, so to implement changes in the companies and in society more light should be given to the issue of workforce diversity and inclusion as well.

1.6 Obstacles to the development of inclusion

The challenges of inclusion are quite complex; they are systemic, personal and professional, economic and social, organizational and political, and simply the result of the increased complexity that comes from more diversity at multiple levels.

While diversity is considered important for the development of any business, there are some factors, which undermine the said development. Some authors (for example, (Uribe-Bohorquez, Martinez-Ferrero, Garcia-Sanchez Isabel-Maria, 2019)) suggest that there inclusion practices in itself are not effective and could even appear harmful, if they are paid too much unnecessary attention. There is, of course, a considerable difference between correct and incorrect development and implementation of such practices, but if managers do not understand the aim of the practices, they may come to the same unpleasant conclusions. Managers are also expected to understand that certain cultural contexts do not support diversity, thus, it would take a longer time to achieve a good level of it. In such cases, inclusion practices should be used gently and should be adapted to the certain situations.

It may happen that the practices are misunderstood by the employees themselves. It means that they must be designed carefully and explained to the employees, so that they do not feel unfairly treated. (Pradeepa, Rajendran, Selvarajah, 2018) One of the other issues with misunderstanding happens when diversity either backfires on itself or provides a field for competition between the inclusion groups as to find out who is above whom on the inclusion practice ladder. (Ferdman, Deane, 2014)

As it was previously stated, teams need to be well-organized and introduced to inclusion practices by a leader with a deep understanding of diversity. Otherwise, the team members are going to perceive differences in their team, as a result, undesirable effects may occur. Thus, organizations need to enhance the perception of similarities and decrease the perception of differences in work teams. (Hentschel, Shemla, Wegge, Kearney, 2013). Team leaders have to model the group design and minimize in-group negativity in such way, that diversity will be the drive of change, not a hindering factor. This requires extensive training on the matter. Leaders need to work on their personal affective tone as well, because employees may adopt that tone through a process of emotional contagion (Sy, Côté, Saavedra, 2005).

It is also worth mentioning that most inclusion practice models are not aimed at rapid progress and slow development of positive outcomes. Many managers trying to implement the practices are set to see the changes in the metrics used to measure effectiveness of the programs in a small amount of time. However, at the first stage, such issues are quite complicated, giving no certain results. This could act as a setback for the leaders as well. Approaches should also be diversified and non-simplistic, otherwise, they would hardly be credible and would generate no result in the long run. Employees have to get enough training, especially good training, on the subject to truly understand it. (Ferdman, Deane, 2014)

A list of the so-called common diversity traps has been summed up well by Thomas and Woodruff (1999). This list can serve as a check-list to take into account when creating guidelines for inclusion practices in order to remember about some of the less evident points. The list includes:

1. Assuming that short-term training of employees is enough;
2. Failing to relate diversity to the organisational mission and key products;
3. Waiting to collect all possible data and ignoring employee perceptions as data for taking action;
4. Waiting for everyone important to be thoroughly behind the effort;
5. Not paying attention to the impact of resistant people in important positions;
6. Isolating the effort in one department (such as human resource) or under one person;
7. Not differentiating between good intentions, usually contained in verbal expressions of support of diversity and the impact of specific institutional actions that go against diversity;
8. Not building coalitions and support with different stakeholders who may fear that the effort will not include them;

9. Assuming that managing diversity is just “good common sense and people skills”;
10. Measuring success by the quantity and magnitude of diversity activities and events, rather than the impact on work and people.

As we can see from this chapter, the topic of inclusion and diversity is vital in the business environment. It is understood in a broad sense and is perceived as a necessary step for development of a successful company. Many authors emphasize the importance of diversity for financial performance, competitive advantage and positive working atmosphere.

However, there are some scholars voicing their concerns about possible negative outcomes of inclusion practices, especially if they are abused or used in an unprofessional way. This means that managers require certain training and guidelines to work with diverse teams in the most efficient way.

Some practices implemented in the other countries are useful for Russia, but it is also worth remembering about certain social and cultural contexts existing in different countries. Russian professional society is quite female-oriented, for example, but there is no deep and clear understanding of diversity itself and its importance. It is vital to adapt the practices and educate the society; otherwise, the approaches to diversity and inclusion could be deeply wrong and backfire on the performance and the team.

CHAPTER 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, description of the methodology used for research in this master thesis is provided. The aim of this chapter is to ensure transparency of data collection and analysis. The research is based on qualitative research methods.

2.1 Secondary data collection

The aim of the following study is to identify existing inclusion practices, find what important steps in achieving diversity are missing and offer a practical solution for the companies to use as a guideline. The findings, therefore, would be valuable for HR management of IT companies, considering that this topic is relatively new for the companies in Russia, but highly important in many other countries, and IT companies usually have to act in an international environment, so their organizational culture and practices have to match global trends.

During the first stage of data collection, available secondary data on diversity and inclusion practices in companies has been studied, including both Russian and foreign ones to gather a pool of information for further comparison and recommendations. As it was found out, there are few existing practices of inclusion in Russia, so any type of companies, not only IT companies, were researched for this secondary data. This investigation allowed us to analyze and understand the main principles of inclusion practices in detail and helped create questions for the semi-structured interview used for obtaining primary data. The information was retrieved mostly from reports and articles, both in English and in Russian, as not all information about Russian companies exists in English.

2.2 Primary data collection

In the second stage, questions for the semi-structured interview were composed. Questions were created with regard to the existing knowledge and understanding of secondary data gathered before, taking into account where the pain points might be and how to identify them. The initial idea of the research was to give these questions mainly to such respondents as HR managers, however, due to the lockdown situation any employees from IT companies who were willing to share their knowledge and understanding were interviewed. The data gathered through these interviews proved useful and can be regarded as a basis for diversity advice for companies. While the practices are organized and controlled by HR management; it is the other employees, especially those belonging to the vulnerable groups, who experience the lack of inclusion and how the practices actually work. So, interviewing employees in different positions, with varying length of experience and in various-sized companies would provide an understanding of the actual situation and help identify the most pressing issues. A combination of a variety of viewpoints will allow the study to be as transparent and practically helpful as it is possible.

The interview is created in semi-structured manner, as there might be various points, which were previously not thought through, but which are going to be found during the interview. Furthermore, semi-structured interview allows for more relaxed atmosphere and mood of both interviewer and respondent (Adams, 2015).

The questions were prepared for the wide range of possible respondents, with the design allowing the interviewed people to ensure that their understanding of inclusion is correct and explaining it to them in case the term itself is new, as the practices might be named differently. Further questions encourage the respondents to explain whether they know of such practices in

their companies or whether they have heard of or experienced such practices somewhere else prior to their current working position. These questions set the tone for the further discussion, as the respondents only have to describe, but not yet to provide their opinion and advice on the matter. The next questions encourage the respondents to share more of their personal experience, whether they faced discrimination themselves, how such situations could have been avoided according to their opinion, and how inclusive is the IT industry in Russia overall and relative to other industries in Russia and the same industry abroad. Further, their advice on the possible practices and changing the situation is asked for. These questions are the point where the respondents describe most of their own opinion and where they step away from the given structure the most, as the responses and interviewer's questions provoked by that may be very different. Finally, for the sake of understanding the relation between the overall societal position and the discriminative problems faced, respondents are asked to provide their age, marital position and number of children, if there are any. Such interview is comprehensive, as the topic overall is quite vague and unresearched, so only through in-depth interviews and discussion many interesting issues can be found and covered.

Interviews can be conducted both in English and in Russian, however, it is understandable that most of the respondents, if not all, are going to choose Russian, being native speakers. The expected length of the interviews is between 30 and 60 minutes depending on the knowledge and interest of the respondent in the issue. Such interviews are usually conducted as face-to-face interviews, however, with the current situation, this is deemed impossible. An alternative is to either schedule video calls through such means as Skype, Zoom, etc. Or to provide the respondent the freedom of reading the questions and carefully thinking on the answers and then sending them via voice messages, as this may allow the person to answer not all question at once, but to choose a convenient time.

In conclusion, all the information that has been gathered will be carefully analyzed and compared to determine the most pressing issues and the best practices, which are already offered in the companies. After this, a recommendation on inclusion practices will be offered based on the result of the analysis. Chapters 1 and 2 of this thesis provide both the explanation of the researched phenomenon and the methodology for investigating its nature and developing further conclusion. Thus, comprehensive description of the research problem, objectives, questions and methodology is provided.

CHAPTER 3. EMPIRICAL PART

In this chapter, findings from the interviews with IT companies' employees will be described and analyzed, and advice on establishing effective inclusion practices in IT companies will be provided. The advice will be based on interview analysis as well, taking into account the concerns, ideas and recommendations of the respondents. To the respondents with no prior knowledge, inclusion is explained as creation of a work environment in which all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully, have equal access to opportunities and resources, and can contribute fully to the organization's success. Diversity is explained as fair representation of all social and cultural groups in the workplace.

3.1 Identified problems of diversity and inclusion in IT companies

Most of the respondents think that the overall situation on the labor market is quite inclusive in Russia, attributing that to the Soviet workforce traditions. Respondent C compared the conditions in Russia to the same in the US, noticing that due to historical events and different economical and political situation development, there is much less workplace discrimination in Russia, as in the USSR women generally worked on the same positions as men, while in the US the role of housewife was often preferred to a working position during the 20th century, or at least a female-oriented working position was preferred, such as teacher or secretary. However, there are issues and obstacles still, which will be described in the following part of the paper. Some of them were mentioned by several respondents and some were provided only once, which may be due to the different sizes of companies.

Lack of female leadership

This problem was described in detail by Respondent C, however, other respondents such as Respondents E and G mentioned this as well. This problem was mentioned both in industry reports and academic literature (for example, Hunt, Prince, Dixon-Fyle, Yee 2018, or Pradeepa, Rajendran, Selvarajah, 2018), as it is voiced universally and is known to be truly important. While there are some women as heads of departments, after a certain point there is a so-called «glass ceiling» situation, where there are no female employees on top or board level of companies. This in itself proves that there is lack of inclusion in companies, because working experience and qualifications of women are, as all respondents state, the same in the industry and up to a certain position level, there is a homogenous composition of workforce (sometimes with certain imbalances in developing and marketing departments, however, the whole workforce

being quite diverse). As respondents say, such imbalance of leadership leads to misunderstanding of their own possibilities: female employees are discouraged from «doing their best», as they see no examples of women on top positions and thus see no extensive future for their careers. This is also reinforced by leadership talks and seminars provided in the companies, where speakers are usually only men. Furthermore, leadership is the strongest when it is diverse, so respondents believe that performance of companies suffers greatly from lack of female employees on top positions. This is the case for the big companies, of course, as in smaller companies and start-ups the leader is usually the same person who started the company or worked the most for it. A thing that was mentioned by almost all respondents in regard to top positions is that the companies have not much vertical growth possibilities, rewarding their employees not with promotions, but rather with bonuses and salary growth linked to certain tasks fulfillment and performance, and as the homogenous population of various departments shows, both genders work effectively in the same positions. However, the lack of female employees on leading positions means that when vertical promotions take place, they favour male employees, which is why there is no diversity. This issue should be targeted as one of the primary by the inclusion practices in companies, as glass ceiling problem is quite hard to resolve and, at the same time, provides an unnecessary obstacle to development and performance of a company.

Misunderstanding of diversity

This issue is multi-faceted, as it includes lack of knowledge about inclusion practices, hostility towards artificially created diversity, viewing inclusion practices as ineffective measures, which discriminate against the non-vulnerable groups in the attempt to create inclusive conditions for the vulnerable groups. While most authors, whose works are mentioned in this research, agree that inclusion practices are extremely important, it is also stated that incorrect use of such practices and lack of education is harmful to the whole perception of diversity and inclusion (Uribe-Bohorquez, Martinez-Ferrero, Garcia-Sanchez Isabel-Maria, 2019). Respondent F has discussed in detail the unpleasant implications employees can be left with, if they are not educated on the subject. Some of the practices may be viewed as providing too much for the vulnerable groups, which leads to lack of trust to the company. As the respondents agree, this is a measure needed to enable diversity in the companies, however, if there is no effective communication on the practices and why they are needed, how exactly they will be implemented and why they carry no danger for those not targeted by these practices,

many employees may be left wondering about why the company needs increasing diversity at all costs instead of developing solutions for other organizational problems.

Another issue of misunderstanding diversity stems from HR management and other organizational positions, when they try to enforce diversity by deliberately choosing someone just because they are female. Respondents C and E said that they felt uncomfortable more than once when inclusion practices were clearly applied for the sake of applying them, not for the sake of changing the situation (for example, deliberately choosing them to do a task or to give a speech during a conference while there were objectively better alternatives from male contestants). Such mistaken application of inclusion practices shows them as something employees are bound not to trust and view critically.

Respondent C mentioned doing a research on female employees in the company for a seminar on women in the industry, which was not company-organized, but was supported by the company and recommended. Other than that event, no educational events or content has been provided by any of the researched companies. Respondents C, F and H stated the need of education on the topic in interactive and approachable manner with possible bonuses for taking part in educational activities or contributing to discussion to motivate employees to treat the topic more attentively. As most respondents mentioned, while the diversity level overall in Russia may be acceptable, the awareness of employees regarding special inclusion practices, which exist to combat discrimination on daily basis and target to points which are not so evident, is low. This is why educational activities are important to spread the information on inclusion and change the mindset of the employees, making them question minor discrimination activities not only in their work life, but in their personal life as well.

Traditionally male and female positions in IT

While the IT industry is more inclusive than others, there is still division of roles and positions in the companies. Even though companies and society are working on eradicating these stereotypes, it depends greatly on the country of operation, age of company and more factors. (Fiscutean 2019) Generally, more technical and, in a way, perceived as more important, positions such as developers are occupied by male employees. When women are looking at their job perspectives in IT, they often face the choice between testers, product and marketing managers and some other positions, which are deemed less “hardcore” than the ones reserved for males. Female developers and program architects are usually alone in groups of male colleagues, facing possible exclusion from group interactions, more pressing tasks and sometimes hostility.

Respondent C links this to the theory of the perfectionism taught to females from early in their lives, while men are taught to be brave and not be afraid of making mistakes, which is why they are not afraid of occupying positions where they will definitely make many mistakes along their way to achieving a goal. Female employees, at the same time, pursue a career where they exercise perfectionism and not propose much new, as it guarantees making fewer mistakes. This may also be the reason the voices of female employees are less heard in companies, which was also mentioned by several respondents – they do not voice their concerns, as they are more afraid of making a mistake.

Discrimination because of seemingly minor disagreements

This is an interesting issue described by Respondent J. It does not specifically apply to gender diversity, but rather opinion and beliefs diversity in a company. This issue is especially worth noting, as it has not been mentioned by any authors. The respondent described the situation of entering an IT company, where everyone is naturally interested in technology and often classified as “geek”, using a certain brand of gadgets (smartphone and laptop). During the first months on the job, the respondent faced mild, but constant jokes and comments on the choice of smartphone brand from the working team, who were all using another brand’s products. Some of the apps they used outwardly in the group were only compatible with their brand and some of the features were also unavailable on the respondent’s smartphone. This “soft bullying” lasted for a few months, finally resulting in the respondent buying a new smartphone in an attempt to fit in. While this is an interesting case, which is definitely specific to the tech industry, it also provides an example of a certain kind of bullying grown people may be up to. Seemingly harmless, it may contribute to group exclusion, drops in performance, generally unfriendly atmosphere and hostility towards each other. Disagreements on some topics are completely normal, however, it is a point that the person working with inclusion and diversity in a company should take into account all budding conflicts, however small and unimportant they may seem, as in this case with the technology discrimination of the new employee.

Lack of intercultural communication

This point was mentioned by Respondents B and H, which is an interesting combination due to the fact that the companies of origin of these respondents are quite different in their organizational culture and cross-borders connections, but are unified by this problem on a daily basis. The respondents described the lack of contacts with colleagues from abroad, which led to

hindering the mind-broadening experience, sharing opinions, learning from different cultures and countries and exchanging knowledge on work-related topic. Ethnically diverse teams with sufficient intercultural communication have less tension and are more likely to succeed, but the lack of such inclusion still exists globally. (Hunt, Prince, Dixon-Fyle, Yee 2018) While a company may work internationally and have partners and employees all over the world, the lack of basic communication with international colleagues does not contribute to the progress of implementing inclusion practices, as in essence they mean exchanging opinions and accepting various viewpoints as valid. Interacting with foreigners is just another part of the diversity scheme, the same as including more female employees to certain activities to learn from them or listen to their opinion.

3.2 Recommendations for developing and implementing inclusion practices

Based on the requests provided by the respondents and their needs stemming from the interviews, further in this chapter recommendations for HR managers will be given, which will help develop diversity in a company. Inclusion practices have to be developed carefully and with due attention to the actual situation in each company and actual needs of employees depending on their position and overall personal situation.

Female leadership programs development

Almost all companies of a certain size have a leadership program, however, there are no specific leadership programs targeted at female employees in the researched IT companies. This advice does not strictly apply to smaller companies and start-ups, which nevertheless should encourage professional development of female employees. As the respondents have mentioned, they do not have anyone to look up to aspirationally and thus they feel that only male employees can be leaders and occupy top-level positions. To break this stereotype, the development of leadership diversity should be introduced via specific leadership programs.

During the leadership program, for which female employees would apply, comprehensive additional education on various aspects of leadership should be provided with a focus on history of female leadership, guest speakers, educational content on business ethics, psychology of management and guidance for time management. The programs should not only contain information specifically on female leadership, but rather combine it with traditional and innovational leadership education, such as strategic planning, innovation driving, organizational

psychology and conflict management and so on. A selection of guest speakers should be invited chosen from the successful professionals in the field, especially female, who would give educational and motivational talks.

Principles of effective communication and communication psychology should be emphasized during the programs as well, because ineffective communication was mentioned by some respondents as one of the pain points for female employees when discussing their promotion and relationship with colleagues. Effective communication is also very important for future leaders, who would have to deal with diverse teams of employees. Being responsible for your words and actions, communicating ideas and giving every employee a fair treatment should be taught as well.

In the first stages of program development, promotion of women for leadership positions after completing the education and reaching some milestones may seem slightly forced, however, to achieve workplace equality some “over-diversity”, as it was called by the respondents, will inevitably take place, and the goal of HR management and employees in charge of leadership program is to enforce smooth transition to stable and equal inclusive leadership conditions.

General education on the topic of diversity and inclusion

As it was mentioned in the section about problems, many people do not understand the meaning of workplace diversity and inclusion, why it is important and how should the organizational culture be changed in order to become more inclusive. However, it was also mentioned that no special education plans and strategies exist to combat the existing lack of knowledge and misunderstandings. Therefore, educational strategies should be implemented in companies. Their goal would be not only to show the employees theoretical notions and make them familiar with main inclusion positive and negative points, but to also change the mindset and gradually make the organizational culture and the thinking of employees more inclusive. This means an extensive education system, which would focus on psychological, biological, sociological and organizational points, as most of the respondents stated lack of knowledge and exclusive culture as the most likely obstacles to development of inclusion in companies.

The education on the topic needs to be constant and corrective towards the mindset. Seminars and workshops are necessary, as they would provide food for thought and theoretical background for gender equality, importance of diversity, behavioral and psychological facts about inclusion in work groups and other important information to build trust in the diversity

measures. Such educational activities might include watching films and discussing them or reading articles and books prior to meetings and discussing what is important in the content about inclusion. At the same time, regular meetings within company to discuss how education is working for every employee and what feedback could be provided to make the program better. It should be firmly stated that any ideas, suggestions, questions should be directed to the managers responsible for the program, who would be glad to accept any immediate feedback and resolve misunderstandings or complaints.

Inclusion is also strongly encouraged through recreational activities organized by the company for its employees, such as movie nights, picnics, dance parties and other informal events, which are good for networking and team building, as well as getting to know other people and making your work environment more diverse and getting to know other employees from different angles as to understand and reflect what is interesting about different personalities and opinions.

Good team building and equal treatment of all employees on informal level as well as on formal is also likely to make them stop minor bullying or discrimination, if they are encouraged to build a friendly and inclusive work atmosphere. However, as it was mentioned, any remaining complaints and questions may always be directed to a responsible manager, as there are always some misunderstandings and uncomfortable situations on the first stages of teaching diversity and inclusion.

The work environment would benefit greatly from inviting a psychologist to give sessions to the employees free of charge. Many problems with getting obstacles on the way to diversity and a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere stem from psychological difficulties, which can be worked through with a specialist in the field to ensure that any negative energy, questions, complaints and general unhappiness are resolved to make the atmosphere more stable.

Encouraging cultural exchange

It was stated that lack of communication with people from other countries and cultures may be a problem for diversity, especially in Russia, as the cultural background here may be rich and variable, but educational and social background is mostly same for all employees, and even though the IT industry is extremely international, there are few actual contacts with people from foreign countries save for narrow work-related issues. Employees have little time and are often too shy to search for communication with foreigners outside of work, such as for hobbies or

leisure, but the diversity mindset would profit greatly from communicating with other cultures and opinions.

The topics of diversity and inclusion are more developed in some other Western countries such as the US, but the topics of communication should not be limited to that and should encompass work and learning, hobbies and anything else favored by the employees. The organization of communication might be different depending from the size of the company, but there are some most useful and practical options such as group video chat with foreigners interested in communication, setting up a renewed version of “pen clubs” with chats or e-mails on the topics of interest or creating chat groups for the employees to share opinions (this would be a good idea for the companies who have subdivisions or partners in other countries, as employees there would be likely interested in communicating) or creating speaking clubs with invited teachers, expats working in Russia or speakers from abroad. Such activities would not only benefit diversity, but also help create a more relaxed atmosphere and give the employees the possibility to improve their language skills. Many companies are famous for providing office activities such as fitness equipment or music instruments for the employees to relax and learn new skills, and improving language while simultaneously expanding diversity knowledge would be a great solution for many employees.

CHAPTER 4. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Conclusion

With the development of global understanding of importance of diversity and inclusion, it can no longer be said that they do not directly contribute to the performance of the company and employee satisfaction. While Russia is in an overall better position regarding availability of technical education and jobs for discriminated groups, research shows that there are still many problems and they are not being solved adequately yet, unlike the progress diversity movements make in many other countries. It is also important to state that a number of issues are not overlooked, but simply misunderstood or not taught correctly, which hinders the development of inclusion practices.

IT industry can seem deceptively inclusive and truly progressive compared to any other industry, however, the interviews and other data show that there are many underlying problems and no existing solutions to improving workplace inclusion. There is no attention to the facts that discriminated groups, especially women, still routinely face obstacles such as inability to get a higher position, minor workplace discrimination, being overlooked for male candidates when

applying for a job and so on. To resolve this, inclusion practices should be gradually introduced in companies in order to change the mindset of the workforce and develop the organizational culture to be more inclusive and understanding of a diverse variety of employees. However, it is important to use the right practices and introduce them correctly, as otherwise development of the said practices may face more obstacles and objection. The issues described in this thesis are stated by the respondents themselves and advice is partly based on their ideas, making it a fair representation of the employees' voices and preferences.

This master thesis consists of two main parts, a theoretical and a practical part. The theoretical part provides knowledge on the topic such as definitions of inclusion and diversity, industry figures, opinions of scholars on importance of inclusion and description of existing situation in Russian companies. Then, research methodology and data search process is explained, moving to the practical part, where the information from interviews with industry professionals is analyzed and recommendations on certain inclusion practices suitable for the industry are provided.

In the beginning of the thesis, two research questions were set. They are thoroughly answered in the practical part of the thesis, providing information on the existing problems, understanding of diversity in Russian IT companies, ideas and complaints of employees; and creating recommendations based on data obtained from the interviews, which can act as a guide for HR managers implementing inclusion in the company.

4.2 Theoretical contribution

This master thesis contributes to the existing pool of literature and research on diversity and inclusion. While these topics are extremely relevant and important today, there is little research on the specific problems of Russian companies and especially IT industry. The study provides a systematic analysis of literature both new to the academia and well-known and trusted by the organizational researchers. It extends the work of such authors, as Kulkarni, V., Vohra, N., Sharma, S., Nair, N.; Boone, C., Lokshin, B., Guenter, H.; Van der Vegt, JS, Hollenbeck, J. R., Humphrey, S. E.; Pradeepa, D., Rajendran, D., Selvarajah, C. by creating a deeper research on topic of inclusion practices, especially in tech industry.

The study combines academic literature, such as books and articles on premises and factors influencing development of inclusion and diversity in organizations and psychological and managerial importance of the diverse teams; and notions and discoveries from professional literature, market analysis and consulting reports, which share the contemporary picture of

problems in the field of diversity management. Thus, a comprehensive, but quite concise analysis of the most relevant literature and secondary data is provided. This study contributes more to the practical side of organizational behavior and diversity studies; however, the whole complex of definitions, opinions and views is provided, presenting a theoretical background for current research and a good backbone for further research on the topic.

The topic is still quite young and is constantly developing; some of the older academic works are already being questioned, while some of the newer research is found to be biased, so it is vital to use both the combination of trusted research on psychological and sociological backgrounds of workplace inclusion, and carefully select information to aid development of diversity mindset.

4.3 Managerial implications

While this study is important theoretically, its empirical part contributes greatly to the practical field. As the need for diversity is becoming more and more obvious, professionals require new research and recommendations on the topic, which can help them in their work on making companies more inclusive. Not all employees may see the purpose of inclusion and its importance for pleasant atmosphere and increased company performance, however, the information, both theoretical and empirical, gathered in this study suggests that it is highly beneficial for companies to implement diversity practices both for the sake of employees and for the sake of companies' performance as well. To receive all the benefits of diversity and inclusion, the problems of the field should be understood and translated correctly into inclusion practices, which have to be implemented carefully.

This study provides industry figures and theoretical background to convey the importance of inclusion to the reader from various perspectives. Further research through interviews with employees from various Russian IT companies suggests certain problems identified by the employees itself and found through the careful selection of interview question. The information is summarized and analyzed, and then described neatly for better understanding of the reader and greater practical contribution. Some of the problems described by the respondents are not mentioned in any of the contemporary academic and market literature, which makes their discovery a useful addition to the pool of existing issues.

Then, an important part for practical use is provided in form of advice and recommendations on what practices are currently needed and how exactly they should be

composed and provided to the employees. The topic may still seem slightly vague for the managers, however, this study provides a direction for more research and tailoring a set of inclusion practices useful for a particular company. It is vital to remember that every practice is offered as a guidance material, so it should be checked against problems in each specific company to identify whether they would be useful. For this, the interview guide provided in the appendices would be useful, as it allows to discuss underlying issues with the employees in order to work on developing workplace diversity.

4.4 Limitations and further research

The limitations of this study stem from the number of people interviewed, as even if it provides in-depth interviews, the more respondents give their opinion, the more valuable and practically important the research would be. Most of the respondents are quite young and have not a long experience in the field, which may present a limitation of research, so in further studies a wider and more diverse group of respondents may be chose. At the same time, most of the employees in the IT industry belong to the younger part of the workforce, so their opinion is extremely important and meaningful.

As it is always with any study which relies on honesty and clear understanding of respondents, it may not fully contract the existing situation, as some of the pain points may be concealed, not thought of, not considered by the researcher and so on. The researcher made sure the information the respondents provided would be confidential, so they can share their opinions honestly, however, different and vague understanding of diversity means respondents may not even think of some problems when discussing inclusion with the reserarcher.

Further research may be conducted with special attention to the specific problems and a deeper study of the issues in the industry. According to the latest reports by the Russian Ministry of Digital Development, The IT industry is growing steadily and is a strategic industry for the country, so good performance is extremely important for it. IT companies in Russia already employ quite a lot of female employees, however, a lot of research and development is needed to make this industry truly inclusive (Fiscutean 2019). It is also one of the most progressive and inclusive industries worldwide, so a study of some other industries to compare them or a comparative study of Russian and foreign companies would no doubt be very useful both theoretically and practically. Another way for further research may be to focus specifically on certain groups, such as mothers with children, immigrants, senior employees, to identify certain

underlying problems present in each of those groups and offer adequate solutions with individual approaches to groups.

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Appendices

1. Interview guide in Russian

I. Информация о респонденте

1. Укажите, пожалуйста, Ваш возраст и стаж работы.
2. В каких компаниях вы работали ранее? Из какой компании (российской/иностранной; какого профиля деятельности) пришли на нынешнее рабочее место?

II. Информация о компании

3. В какой компании Вы работаете сейчас? В какой области осуществляется ее деятельность? Какова ее структура, есть ли у компании подразделения?
4. Какую должность Вы занимаете? В течение какого времени Вы работаете в этой компании и на этой должности?
5. Сколько сотрудников в компании, в которой Вы работаете сейчас? Какое приблизительно соотношение мужчин и женщин среди сотрудников, какая

возрастная группа преобладает среди сотрудников? Представителей какого пола и возрастной группы больше на руководящих позициях?

6. По какому признаку происходит повышение сотрудников в должности?

III. Практики инклюзии

7. Известно ли Вам понятие инклюзии и практик инклюзии на рабочем месте?

*Инклюзия в данном случае - вовлечение в рабочую деятельность особо уязвимых групп персонала, и создание для всех сотрудников одинаковых условий работы без предрассудков.

Примеры практик: равный доступ и поддержка дополнительного образования; гибкий рабочий график, адаптированный к индивидуальным потребностям; семинары и воркшопы на тему инклюзии; создание комфортной и открытой рабочей среды,

8. Существуют ли в Вашей компании практики инклюзии? Если да, то какие и почему именно они? Если нет, то слышали ли Вы о таких практиках в других компаниях?
9. Зачем, по Вашему мнению, нужны практики инклюзии? Нужны ли они именно в Вашей компании?
10. Сталкивались ли Вы с объективно несправедливым отношением, дискриминацией к уязвимым группам персонала, нуждающимся в инклюзии, в деятельности Вашей компании? В Вашем личном опыте трудоустройства? С чем были связаны данные ситуации, как можно было бы их избежать?
11. Какие подобные практики кажутся Вам интересными, потенциально результативными, что бы Вы хотели использовать в работе компании?

12. Какие препятствия могут встать на пути введения практик инклюзии? Как их можно избежать?
13. Что Вы думаете об инклюзивности IT-индустрии в России в целом? Насколько она прогрессивна в этом вопросе относительно других отраслей? Насколько прогрессивна (по Вашему мнению) относительно компаний данной отрасли в других странах?

2. Interview guide in English

I. Respondent profile

1. Please state your age and work experience.
2. In what companies have you worked before? What company (of Russian/foreign origin; of what industry sector) was your previous workplace?

II. Company profile

3. In what company are you currently working? What is the industry of the company's activities? Please describe its structure and subdivisions, if any.
4. State your job position and length of experience on this position in this company.
5. How many employees are there in your company? What is the male/female ratio, what is the predominant age group (in general and on management positions)?
6. According to what achievements and milestones are the employees promoted?

III. Inclusion practices

7. Are you familiar with the notions of workplace inclusion and inclusion practices?

*Inclusion in this case – achievement of a work environment in which all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully, have equal access to opportunities and resources, and can contribute fully to the organization's success.

Examples of inclusion practices: equal access to and support of additional education; flexible working hours adapted to individual needs; inclusion workshops and seminars; open and comfortable working conditions.

8. Are there any inclusion practices in your company? If yes, what kind and why exactly those? If no, have you heard about such practices in other companies?
9. Why do you think these practices are needed? Is there a need for such practices in your company?
10. Have you faced discrimination and unfair treatment in your own experience (in the current workplace and before)? Why did it happen and how could such situations possibly be avoided?
11. What inclusion practices seem interesting and effective to you?
12. What obstacles to development of inclusion practices exist in your company and in the industry? How can they be avoided?
13. What do you think of diversity and inclusivity in the IT industry in Russia (especially compared to the foreign IT companies or local companies working in different industry)?

3. Respondent profile

| Respondent ID and gender | Age and experience | Company origin | Company size | Position held |
|--------------------------|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Respondent A - F | 23/4 years | Russia | 400+ employees | Middle developer |
| Respondent B - M | 27/6 years | Russia | 1000+ employees | UX Researcher |

| | | | | |
|------------------|-----------------|--------|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| Respondent C - F | 35/15 years | Russia | 1000+ employees | Product Marketing manager |
| Respondent D - F | 24/0.5 years | Russia | 80+ employees | Design Approval intern |
| Respondent E - F | 22/2.5 years | Russia | 1000+ employees | Senior developer |
| Respondent F - M | 23/5 years | Russia | 5 employees | Tech lead of IT startup |
| Respondent G - F | 23/2 years | Russia | 20+ employees | Senior developer |
| Respondent H - F | 24/2 years | Russia | 300+ employees | Junior analyst |
| Respondent I - F | 25/2.5 years | Russia | 400+ employees | Middle developer |
| Respondent J - F | 24/4 years | Russia | 300+ employees | Junior developer |
| Respondent K - F | 26/5 years | Russia | 400+ employees | UX Designer |
| Respondent L - F | 28/7 years | Russia | 100+ employees | Senior developer |